



The Paralysis of Perfection

Devotional May 3, 2011

My two youngest children were in the Abbotsford Children's Theater production of Charlotte's Web this past weekend. As we were doing their make-up at home prior to going on-stage one day, my son said nervously, "I hope I get it all right this time and don't forget any of my lines". My daughter chimed in, "It doesn't really matter. No one ever gets everything perfect every performance. That's what makes it interesting!" What a great attitude! I wish that I could walk through every day with the same perspective.

Every time I venture out into the public sphere I feel like I am faced with the same challenge that my kids expressed. I have the option to "lean in" and, in so doing, embrace the possibility of failure, or to hold back and obsess about "getting it right". I really want to do things well and secretly hope that, if I do, somehow everyone will approve, but at the same time, I know how dangerous this attitude could be. I'm being convicted that if I place too much value on a perfect performance, I am seeking the approval of people rather than of God, and this could paralyse me all together.

As I have thought about these options this week, I have been reminded of passage in Ecclesiastes that we studied while working through the book Knowing God.

*Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land... **Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.** As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.*

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well. Ecclesiastes 11:1-6.

As Matthew Henry's commentary on this passage explains...Every man must labour to be a blessing to that place where the providence of God casts him. Wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. If we magnify every little difficulty, start objections, and fancy hardships, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work. Winds and clouds of tribulation are, in God's hands, designed to try us. God's work shall agree with his word, whether we see it or not. And we may well trust God to provide for us, without our anxious, disquieting cares. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season, in God's time, you

shall reap.

This passage challenges me to let go of the need for approval and for perfect performances: to stop “watching the wind”, “looking at the clouds”, and trying to control the outcome. God wants us to “sow” and “not be idle”, and allow Him to determine which of our actions will succeed and last, and which will fade away. “Whatever your hand find to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10), and then “eat and drink, and find satisfaction in [your] work” (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

Let’s lean in, and leave the rest to God.

Blessings to you today,

Kristal Toews